CLAIMS

1. A method of providing for the taking of a combined picture, the method comprising:

(a) at a site of interest, using a data-storage element to store data comprising an historical image or a reference to it;

(b) using a camera both (i) to read the stored data at the site whereby to directly, or by following a said reference, download said historical image as first image digital data, and (ii) to optically capture a current image at the site to form second image data;

(c) in the camera, combining said first and second image data to form a combined picture; and

(d) storing the picture in a picture memory of the camera.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein in step (b) said stored data is read using a data interface of the camera that requires to be positioned at or juxtaposed the data-storage element.

3. A method according to claim 1, wherein step (c) is carried out by an image-combining arrangement of the camera, the historical image downloaded in step (b) being automatically provided to the image-storage arrangement at the time the image is downloaded

4. A method according to claim 1, wherein in step (b) the second image data changes as the scene pointed to by the camera changes, step (c) using the current second image data in forming said combined picture.

5. A method according to claim 1, wherein in step (c) the positioning and/or size of the first image in the combined picture is electronically controlled.

6. A method according to claim 1, in step (b) the second image data changes as the scene pointed to by the camera changes, step (c) using the current second image data in forming said combined picture and step (c) involving electronically controlling the positioning and/or size of the first image in the combined picture.

7. A method according to claim 6, wherein the positioning of the first image in the combined picture is incrementally controlled.

8. A method according to claim 1, wherein in step (c) the first image is placed in foreground relation with the second image.

9. A method according to claim 1, wherein in step (c) the first image is placed in background relation with the second image.

10. A system that provides for the taking of a combined picture, the system comprising:

- a data-storage element provided at a site of interest for storing data comprising historical image or a reference to it; and
- a camera comprising:
  - a first subsystem arranged to read the data stored in said data-storage element whereby to directly, or by following a said reference, download to the camera said historical image as first image data;
  - a second subsystem for converting an optically-input second image into second digital image data;
  - an image-combining arrangement, including a display, for combining the images represented by the first and second image data to form a combined picture; and
  - a picture storage arrangement responsive to user input to store said combined picture.

11. A system according to claim 10, wherein the first subsystem of the camera is arranged to automatically pass the first image data to the image-combining arrangement at the time that the first image data is downloaded.

12. A system according to claim 10, wherein the first subsystem of the camera comprises a data interface that requires positioning at, or in juxtaposition to, said data-storage element in order to read therefrom said first image data or a reference to it, whereby selection of a desired said first image is effected by appropriately physical positioning the camera to enable the data interface to read the data storage element corresponding to the desired first image.

13. A system according to claim 10, wherein the second subsystem of the camera is so arranged that said second digital image data changes as the scene pointed to by the camera changes, the image-combining arrangement being arranged to form said combined picture using the current second image data.

14. A system according to claim 10, wherein the image-combining arrangement further includes user-operable first-image control means for electronically controlling the positioning and/or size of the first image in the combined picture.

15. A system according to claim 10, wherein the second subsystem is so arranged that said second digital image data changes as the scene pointed to by the camera changes, the image-combining arrangement being arranged to form said combined picture using the current second image data, and the image-combining arrangement further including user-operable first-image control means for electronically controlling the positioning and/or size of the first image in the combined picture.

16. A system according to claim15, wherein the first-image control means is arranged to incrementally control the positioning of the first image in the combined picture.

17. A camera comprising:

- a first subsystem for electronically downloading, from externally of the camera, first digital image data representing a first image, the first subsystem comprising a data interface that requires positioning at, or in juxtaposition to, an external data-storage element in order to read therefrom said first image data or a reference to it, whereby selection of a desired said first image is effected by appropriately physical positioning the camera to enable the data interface to read the data-storage element corresponding to the desired first image;
- a second subsystem for converting an optically-input image into second digital image data;

- an image-combining arrangement, including a display, for combining the images represented by the first and second image data to form a combined picture; and
- a picture storage arrangement responsive to user input to store said combined picture.

18. A camera according to claim 17, wherein the first subsystem is arranged to automatically pass the first image data to the image-combining arrangement at the time that the first image data is downloaded.

19. A camera according to claim 17, wherein the second subsystem is so arranged that said second digital image data changes as the scene pointed to by the camera changes, the image-combining arrangement being arranged to form said combined picture using the current second image data.

20. A camera according to claim 17, wherein the image-combining arrangement further includes user-operable first-image control means for electronically controlling the positioning and/or size of the first image in the combined picture.

21. A camera according to claim 17, wherein the second subsystem is so arranged that said second digital image data changes as the scene pointed to by the camera changes, the image-combining arrangement being arranged to form said combined picture using the current second image data, and the image-combining arrangement further including user-operable first-image control means for electronically controlling the positioning and/or size of the first image in the combined picture.

22. A camera according to claim 21, wherein the first-image control means is arranged to incrementally control the positioning of the first image in the combined picture.

23. A camera according to claim 17, wherein the image-combining arrangement is arranged to place the first image in foreground relation with the second image.

24. A camera according to claim 17, wherein the image-combining arrangement is arranged to place the first image in background relation with the second image.

25. A camera comprising:

- a first subsystem for electronically downloading, from externally of the camera, first digital image data representing a first image; the first subsystem being arranged to read said first image data or a reference to it from a data-storage element installed in the local environment;
- a second subsystem for converting an optically-input second image into second digital image data;
- an image-combining arrangement, including a display, for combining the images represented by the first and second image data to form a combined picture; and
- a picture storage arrangement responsive to user input to store said combined picture;

the first subsystem being arranged to automatically pass the first image data to the image-combining arrangement at the time that data is downloaded.

26. A camera according to claim 25, wherein the second subsystem is so arranged that said second digital image data changes as the scene pointed to by the camera changes, the image-combining arrangement being arranged to form said combined picture using the current second image data.

27. A camera according to claim 25, wherein the image-combining arrangement further includes user-operable first-image control means for electronically controlling the positioning and/or size of the first image in the combined picture.

28. A camera according to claim 25, wherein the second subsystem is so arranged that said second digital image data changes as the scene pointed to by the camera changes, the image-combining arrangement being arranged to form said combined picture using the current second image data, and the image-combining arrangement further including user-operable first-image control means for electronically controlling the positioning and/or size of the first image in the combined picture.

29. A camera according to claim 28, wherein the first-image control means is arranged to incrementally control the positioning of the first image in the combined picture.

30. A camera according to claim 25, wherein the image-combining arrangement is arranged to place the first image in foreground relation with the second image.

31. A camera according to claim 25, wherein the image-combining arrangement is arranged to place the first image in background relation with the second image.